

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Harding County School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004**

Team Members: Barb Boltjes, Team Leader, Penny McCormick-Gilles, Education Specialist and Dave Halverson, Transition Specialist

Dates of On Site Visit: September 15, 2004

Date of Report: September 24, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Child find articles

- Screening announcement
- Referral/evaluation/placement data
- File reviews
- Enrollment data
- Annual application for IDEA funds
- General district information
- Screening list
- Part B Application for funds
- Data table I, age and placement alternatives
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent rights brochure
- Data by age and placement alternative
- District dropout rate,
- SAT 9 data
- Staff interviews
- Exit data table H
- Content standards
- Personnel data
- Staff certification
- Contract staff licenses
- District supervision/evaluation policy
- CSPD needs assessment data
- Teacher surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated the school district has an established and effective ongoing child find system to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years who may need special education. An effective pre-referral and referral system is in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay.

The steering committee reported the district provides for children with disabilities that are eligible for special education and are voluntarily enrolled in private schools by their parents to participate in services in accordance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The district refers or places a child with disabilities in a private school or facility, and ensures special education and related services are provided in accordance with requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The steering committee noted the district uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyzes district-level data to determine if the district is making progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators.

The steering committee stated the district reviews and analyzes discipline data and revises policies/procedures if significant discrepancies are occurring between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

The steering committee noted the district ensures they employ or contract with an adequate supply of personnel who are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed or certified, to work with children with disabilities.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee reported the majority of staff surveys indicate they have input into the identification of staff development needs and planning of activities related to students with disabilities, three teachers disagreed, and two teachers indicated they did not know.

The steering committee stated the majority of teachers felt they have adequate training, information, and supports to implement student IEPs, two teachers indicated they did not and three indicated this did not apply to them.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as meeting the requirements.

Needs Improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as needing improvement.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Student surveys
- Parent surveys
- Staff surveys
- State data tables
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported the district provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities. The district has not suspended or expelled any student for more than 10 school days.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Student file reviews
- Parent surveys
- Interviews
- Prior notice/consent form
- District procedure
- Student file reviews
- Teacher surveys
- MDT/eligibility report form
- Table A general district information
- Eligibility technical assistance guide
- In-service training agenda
- Cooperative forms
- Monitoring report
- CSPD needs assessment

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated reevaluations were conducted at least every three years in three out of four student files reviewed. The three year reevaluation timeline was late in one file reviewed.

Out of compliance

The steering committee noted in four of six initial evaluations, documentation of informed parental consent was available. Prior notice/consent for evaluation was acquired for all evaluations used to determine eligibility in nine of eleven files reviewed. Previous evaluations were used with one child when transitioning from the Part C to the Part B program. An evaluation brought by a parent was used to determine eligibility for another student without the use of prior notice/consent process. In two of six initial evaluations, sufficient evaluation data was available to determine eligibility. Information was available to develop present levels of performance and educational need in one of six files.

The steering committee indicated functional evaluation data was not available in all areas of suspected disability in seven of eleven student files reviewed. In three of eleven student files, available functional assessment data was summarized in a report format and given to parents.

Validation Results

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needs improvement for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as out of compliance for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

The district has made a concerted effort to gather functional information for students upon reevaluation, however, functional information was not available in areas of suspected disability. The functional information is not summarized in the evaluation report nor carried forward into the present levels of performance and therefore annual goals and short term objectives are not skill based.

Additional out of compliance issues are listed below:

A student listed on the child count as speech language must be reevaluated to include physical therapy and occupational therapy and all areas of achievement. This information was gathered from a medical report from Children's Hospital in Denver. Therefore, the student was not evaluated in all areas of suspected disability.

A student listed on the child count as speech language must be reevaluated to include all areas of development and meet the requirement for multidisciplinary and multifaceted. The Battelle is the only current evaluation information in the file. The student is 4 years, 10 months of age. The scores on the Battelle indicated the student qualified in the area of speech language and adaptive skills. The remainder of the evaluation information used was taken from former speech evaluations and was very fragmented. The current evaluations for the student listed above do not contain the necessary information to determine eligibility.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parent rights brochure
- Prior notice form
- Surrogate parent technical assistance guide
- Data table L, complaints and hearings

Meets requirements

The steering committee reports the district informs parents of their parental rights under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The steering committee reports parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

The steering committee indicated the district provides the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

The steering committee stated the district has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions and due process issues.

Out of compliance

The steering committee reports the district does not have a list of individuals who would serve as a surrogate parent available in the district at this time. The foster parent would typically be assigned as the surrogate parent if parental rights have been terminated.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as noted by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:29:07 List of types and location of information

Each school district shall provide parents on request a list of types and location of education records collected, maintained, or used by the district. In nine out of ten files reviewed, the monitoring team determined that there is more than one file on a child, the files are not cross-referenced. Therefore, parents are unable to access information pertaining to their child because no one file contains all of the necessary information.

ARSD 24:05:30:15 Surrogate Parent

Through interview, the monitoring team determined a list of individuals who would serve as a surrogate parent was not available. The monitoring team agrees with the area identified as out of compliance.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- Student file reviews
- Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Hearings
- Monitoring
- Comprehensive plan
- Prior notice form
- Parent right brochure
- IEP form
- Child count

Promising practice

The steering committee stated the district accesses opportunities for course work electives for students through Northwest Area Schools vocational units. These units are made available on a rotating basis and allow students to access a variety of life skills.

Meets requirements

The steering committee indicated the district ensures the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. There are policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reported in student files reviewed, representatives from other agencies were not invited to participate in the IEP meetings for students of transition age. Agency involvement is initiated based upon the students needs and at an age the team deems appropriate.

The steering committee reported in 10 of 11 IEPs reviewed, it was consistently documented how and when progress would be reported to parents. In 10 of 11 IEPs reviewed, the statements on the modification page specified the location and frequency of each modification required by the student.

The steering committee indicated student centered life planning outcomes for employment and independent living were documented in one of two files reviewed of students turning 14 years old.

Out of compliance

The steering committee reported in two of three files reviewed, transition evaluation was conducted to gather information regarding the student's interests and the present levels of performance in six of eleven files reviewed contained specific skills in the student's strengths, weakness and the student's involvement in the general curriculum. Present levels of performance are linked to functional evaluation in four of eleven files reviewed. Goals are linked to the present levels of performance in six of eleven files reviewed.

The steering committee noted eight of eleven IEPs reviewed consistently contained skill based, measurable/observable annual goals and eight of eleven of IEPs reviewed consistently contained measurable short term objectives that include the conditions, performance and criteria.

The steering committee stated seven of eleven files reviewed contained a written justification which described why instruction for the student could not be conducted in the regular classroom setting.

A statement of transition services/activities was documented in two of three files of students age 16 years old or younger if appropriate.

The steering committee indicated two of three IEPs reviewed for students 16 years old or younger, documented transition goals, services and/or activities needed by the student. These services are linked to the student's life planning outcomes, present levels of performance and transition assessments.

Validation Results**Promising practice**

The Harding County school district is a member of the Northwest Area Schools Multi-district/Educational Cooperative, which has given students in the district an opportunity to access a variety of vocational services. The vocational program has eight classroom units in the following areas: Agriculture, Basic Mechanics Technology, Building Trades, Computer Aided Design/Computer Aided Mechanics CAD/CAM, Electricity/Electronics, Health Occupations, Metal Fabrications and Quantity Foods. The

vocational units are mobile and travel between eight districts. Each unit stays in a district for one semester. The units are on a four-year cycle giving students the opportunity to take each unit/class throughout their high school career. Students attend the class two periods per day allowing the student to earn one credit per semester for the class.

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program as a promising practice.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program as requirements. Through staff interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team noted IEP's for students 16 years of age or younger documented transition goals, services and activities needed by the student. These services are linked to the student's life planning outcomes, present levels of performance and transition assessment.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews, observations and interviews, the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for items in need of improvement.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of IEP

Through file reviews, interviews and observation, the monitoring team agrees with steering committee data for items out of compliance. In all files reviewed, special education staff is completing functional assessment. Staff is beginning to use this information to develop present levels of performance. Functional evaluation information is not consistently linked to annual goals and short term objectives in twelve files reviewed.

ARSD 24:05:27:13.01 Agency responsibilities for transition services.

ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Through file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team noted representatives from other agencies were not consistently invited to IEP meetings for students age 16 and older nor did the agency take other steps to obtain their participation in the planning of transition services.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State data tables
- Surveys
- File reviews
- Child count

Promising practice

The steering committee reported the number of students receiving services in the resource room has gone from 10.00% to 10.53% to 3.70 over the past 3 years. The state average for year 2002 was 22.22%.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the information identified for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee as meeting the requirements.